

Not So Starry-Eyed by GhostGrantaire

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Summary:

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Steve propped himself up on his elbow to look at her, sleepy and confused. Nancy kept her face carefully neutral. “Lizzie? Sure I have.”

Nancy frowned at the nickname. “I think I’d remember,” she replied, and damn it, that definitely sounded bitter.

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Author's Note:

For the prompt "Jealousy/Green"

Title comes from The Decemberists' "Make You Better"

May 1986

It had been a long day. College had just let out for the summer, and Nancy was looking forward to spending a couple of weeks with Steve in Indianapolis. He was sharing an apartment with a couple of roommates while he went to school, but they'd all gone back home for the summer, so it would just be them.

A couple of Steve's friends had held a party that day to celebrate before splitting ways for summer, and Steve promised them that they'd at least stop by. Nancy hadn't minded— though they hadn't talked much about their college friends, she still wanted to meet the people Steve had been getting to know.

They hadn't stayed long, just dropping by for introductions like Steve had suggested. He was excited to let Nancy meet everyone, though it was a small party. He'd dragged her around to meet everyone, constantly interrupting to press kisses to her neck or wrap an arm around her shoulders. He always got clingy after they'd spent time apart, and Nancy couldn't stop blushing.

Steve's friends were all great, not that she'd been expecting otherwise. But one girl, Liz, stood out in particular. Her and Steve had seemed close, *very* close. Nancy barely even got to talk to Liz since her and Steve spent so much time chatting and joking with each other. They had all these inside jokes that Nancy didn't get at all, and from what it seemed like, the others didn't get either.

It was weird. Nancy didn't know why it bothered her. Maybe because she'd heard the names of his other friends— Esme, Daniel, Marcos, Lily— if only once or twice over the phone, but he'd never mentioned

a Liz. She tried not to think anything of it, but judging by their closeness, it seemed unlikely that she would've just not come up.

She was pretty too. Nancy tried not to let herself think about that, but it was hard when she was lounging around in a swimsuit by a pool. Liz was tall, almost as tall as Steve, with light curly hair and dark brown eyes that seemed to pull you in. She held herself with a confidence that reminded Nancy of her own boyfriend.

But still, it hadn't really mattered until they were about to leave. Liz had happily suggested Nancy take some Italian Cream Cake before she left, and Nancy had asked Steve if he wanted some as well. Liz had responded instead, throwing out a "no" before teasing Steve about his walnut allergy.

Nancy hadn't known what to say to that. Probably because she didn't know Steve was allergic to walnuts.

They'd left soon after that, wandering around Indianapolis for Steve to point out his favorite spots. Nancy found herself immersed in her boyfriend's jokes and stories once more, all thoughts of Liz fading from her mind.

It wasn't until later that night that the thoughts came back to her. Steve was already half-asleep beside her, sprawled out in the way he always did when he'd had a long day. His arm was slung over her, a source of comfort and affection, but suddenly she felt anxious.

"Did you have fun today?" she asked quietly. He opened his eyes barely to look at her before closing them again, pulling her closer.

"Mm-hmm," he responded back. "You?"

"Yeah," she answered back, keeping her eyes carefully set on his face. "I liked meeting your friends."

A smile tugged at his lips, but he still didn't open his eyes when he replied. "I'm glad. They're pretty great."

Nancy bit her lip. She knew she should just let it go and stop while she was ahead, but she couldn't stop picturing the casual teasing and easy affection that she'd seen earlier that day.

“Liz was nice. You guys seem pretty close,” she finally spoke up. Her heart was beating quickly, and she hoped she sounded nonchalant. Steve opened his eyes, and Nancy worried she’d given something away, but he just seemed amused more than anything else.

“We are,” he answered back, sounding unconcerned, and Nancy felt a pain in her chest at that. She tried to remind herself it didn’t matter, that she was close to plenty of friends like that. It wasn’t like she didn’t know Steve was close to his friends– both of them were still terribly codependent with Jonathan, after all. This shouldn’t be any different. But nonetheless, there was still a part of her that had been hoping Steve would shrug it off and say not really or something else along those lines.

“Oh,” Nancy continued after taking a breath. “You’ve never mentioned her before.”

Steve propped himself up on his elbow to look at her, sleepy and confused. Nancy kept her face carefully neutral. “Lizzie? Sure I have.”

Nancy frowned at the nickname. “I think I’d remember,” she replied, and damn it, that definitely sounded bitter.

“She–” Steve suddenly stopped, sounding more awake. “Wait a second. You’re jealous.”

His voice was amused, and filled with a smugness that made Nancy curse internally.

She scowled. “I’m not jealous. I’m just curious.”

“No you’re not,” he insisted with a grin. “You’re 100% jealous. You.”

He was definitely enjoying this. Nancy shut her eyes, instantly regretting this entire conversation. “Steve, I swear to god–”

“You complain about me being jealous *constantly* and here you are, interrogating me about a girl,” he teased, and she frowned at that.

“I’m not apologizing for giving you shit about that. You’re an ass when you’re jealous,” she reminded him.

"I know," he replied easily. She hadn't been wrong about that. "But right now you're the jealous one. Honestly, this is just too exciting for me—"

"You know, if you're going to be a dick about it, just forget I said anything," she snapped, feeling angry at herself for being so silly. She turned her back to him, pulling the covers up. She wanted to bury down inside the covers, but she knew that was going too far.

She hated feeling this way. Steve's jealousy and insecurity had been their biggest problem towards the start of their relationship, Steve always getting antsy when Nancy spent a lot of time with Jonathan. Nancy knew it was a sore spot for him, especially considering his parents' situation, but they'd worked through it together, learning to trust each other more. And here she was jealous of some girl she'd only met that day.

"Nancy." Steve's voice was softer now, less taunting, but she could still hear the smile. She shuffled down further into the sheets. "Nance, I'm sorry. It's just funny to me."

"How is this funny?" She demanded. She felt so stupid and silly and he thought it was funny.

"I've just never had a girlfriend be so jealous of my cousin before, that's all."

Nancy took a second to let that sink in before she turned back over and stared at him. Steve was smiling at her like he was seconds away from laughing, and she felt the color drain out of her face.

"Your *cousin*?" she repeated back dumbly. "But you've told me about your cousins! It's just Patrick, Andrew, and Eliza— *Elizabeth*."

Oh god. She knew all about Elizabeth— Steve's favorite cousin who'd been the most sane member of his entire family. They hadn't been that close, growing up on opposite sides of the country, but Steve always mentioned how much fun they had at reunions and birthdays. The pieces all clicked together, and Nancy groaned in horror. This time she didn't stop herself— she pulled the covers up over her head and stayed there, staring blankly at her boyfriend's chest.

She heard Steve chuckle slightly from above and wasn't really that surprised when he yanked the covers down, leaning over her to meet her eyes. His lips were still upturned in a slight smile, but there was a look of slight concern in his eyes.

"Nancy, what's going on?" He asked kindly. She felt tears prick at her eyes and she shook her head, not able to meet his eyes.

"I'm sorry," she muttered, face flushing.

"What the hell are you sorry for?" he asked, knocking their feet together.

"I'm being stupid," she mumbled, closing her eyes. She opened them again when Steve reached for her hand and squeezed it. Now he was frowning.

"You're not being stupid," he argued. "I mean, you definitely don't have anything to be jealous of, but still. Can you just talk to me?"

She stared at him, biting her lip. She wanted to talk to him— God knows how many of their problems were fixed in a second after actually, you know, communicating with each other— but she didn't even have a grasp on why she upset. She didn't know where to begin.

"You're allergic to walnuts," she blurted out before she could stop herself.

Steve blinked, looking at her like she was insane. "I'm sorry?" he asked, clearly assuming he'd misheard.

"I didn't know." She stumbled over the words, frustrated with herself. "I didn't know until Liz said it this afternoon. I just— I should know that! What if I made breakfast one day and put walnuts in it and you had an allergic reaction?"

Steve's eyes were flitting around in confusion, still very lost. "You're going to start cooking again?" He asked after a second. "Because I'm really not sure if we're ready for that."

She huffed at the jab at her culinary skills, trying to start over. She knew she wasn't making sense, but she didn't know how else to say

it. "Scratch that. Just... what if we went out for dinner one night and you ate walnuts and started getting sick and then we called an ambulance and they asked me if you were allergic to anything and I just *wouldn't know*."

She looked at him intensely at the last part, wishing he'd understand, but he just stared back blankly. "Um, you could just ask me? Honestly I just get hives, and I just need to pop some Benadryl, I don't think we'd need an ambulance. I'm *really* not getting the whole walnut thing."

"It's not about walnuts!" Nancy exclaimed in exasperation, pushing him out of the way as she sat up, trying to gather her thoughts. Steve sat up slowly beside her as she took a deep breath. "Look, what am I allergic to?"

"Pineapple. And cats," Steve answered back immediately, and Nancy sighed sadly, letting her head fall back against the wall. "Nance, you're gonna have to walk me through this."

She ignored him. "And if I asked you what my favorite color was, or my favorite movie, or my first pet's name, you'd know, wouldn't you?"

Steve frowned, darting his eyes around in thought. "I mean, yeah."

Nancy ran her hands through her hair raggedly, feeling absolutely rotten. "Exactly."

"What are you talking about, Nancy?" Steve sounded completely awake at this point, and she felt terrible for putting that hint of worry in his voice.

"I don't know," she admitted. She didn't know where any of this was coming from. Maybe she'd always felt like this and just never owned up to it before. "Just- you and Liz, I get it now, you're family and stuff, but... she knew all of this stuff about you. Trivial stuff, but stuff that I should know. And you had all these inside jokes and you know each other so well, and... and I guess I got a bit jealous of what you have with her."

Steve was watching her carefully, his face a blank slate. "To be fair, Nancy, I've known Elizabeth for a lot longer than I've known you," he replied slowly. "She is my cousin, after all."

"I know, I know, but that's not all, is it? It's not that we don't know stuff about each other. It's that I don't know stuff about you. I just feel like... like you know all this stuff about me, and I don't know anything about you. Like I never ask or don't listen or—" she broke off in frustration, taking a deep breath with closed eyes. "You know so much about me, and I don't even know what you're allergic to. Fuck, I don't even know your favorite color."

She let out a bitter laugh at the end, feeling hot tears burn in her eyes as she thought about it. Steve was quiet beside her for a long moment. She kept her eyes on the ceiling, too frightened to look at his expression.

"That's what you're upset about?" Steve asked, but he didn't sound amused or like he wasn't taking her seriously, although Nancy probably wouldn't blame him. He just sounded like he was trying to get things right.

Nancy sighed, raising her shoulders in a half-hearted shrug.

Suddenly, Steve moved beside her, and Nancy opened her eyes just in time for him to pull her down the bed so she was laying down again. He rolled on top of her, holding himself over her with his arm as he looked down at her.

"Who cares about all that stuff?" Steve asked, sounding bewildered. Nancy opened her mouth to protest, but Steve didn't let her. "Seriously. That stuff doesn't matter."

He pressed a light kiss to her lips, letting their breaths mingle between them before he continued talking. "Everything that matters? You know all that."

She frowned at him, slightly confused. Steve just smiled and began to elaborate.

"You know when I realized I liked boys as well as girls," Steve

muttered, pressing a kiss to her cheek. Nancy pressed her lips together, the answer coming to her easily. *Last semester of high school, though he always said he should've known earlier.* She gave a small nod, and he continued, pressing a kiss to her other cheek.

“You know what I had nightmares about for a year.” That was easy. *Showing up to the Byers' house too late.* He'd told it to her one night when they'd been curled up around each other, a breathy confession into cold air.

Steve didn't wait for an affirmation, instead pressing a kiss to her nose and continuing.

“You know what my biggest regrets are.” *The spray paint. Fighting Jonathan in the alley.*

“You know about the worst fight I ever had with my parents.” *The summer after senior year of high school.*

“You know what my biggest fear is.” *Turning into his father.*

“You know about all the time I wasted in high school being a dick. You know how I still mess up constantly, and how hard I have to try to be better sometimes. You know how to make me better.” He listed off these things quickly, pressing kisses to her eyelids and nose. After that he stopped, looking down at her. “You know about the first time I ever told someone I love you and meant it.”

She blinked up at him at that, biting her lip when she saw the small, intimate smile he was casting down at her. “I don't know about that,” she whispered.

“No?” he asked, eyes glinting fondly from the light from outside. “I'll give you a hint.”

He grinned before kissing her, mouth soft and gentle against hers. He pulled back and leaned their foreheads together. “I love you, Nancy Wheeler.”

Nancy let her eyes drift shut as she smiled, feeling a tight contentment in her chest. He'd said the words more times than she could keep track of, but they never lost their touch.

"I love you too," she whispered back, and she could feel the way his cheeks pulled up in a smile. "I'm sorry I was jealous. Even if Liz wasn't your cousin, I know- I know you'd never..."

She faded off, opening her eyes to look at him, and he was smiling down at her. "Good. Because *you* know me, Nancy Wheeler. Everything else is just facts."

After a moment of smiling at her, Steve rolled off of her, head flopping back onto the pillow. He swung an arm around her waist and pulled her close, their legs tangling together. He yawned loudly. "Are we good now? Because we can keep talking, but I may end up falling asleep," he admitted.

She smiled at him, feeling a deep fondness for the man beside her. "Go to sleep" she commanded gently, pressing a light kiss to his neck before settling down beside him.

The quiet that descended over them after that was peaceful, nothing like the anxiety-ridden silence that had frightened her before. She felt herself dozing off, but there was still one thing on her mind.

"Hey Steve?" she whispered, propping her head up on his chest to look at him. He hummed in response, not opening his eyes. "What's your favorite color?"

He lifted his head and blinked down at her, a smile pulling at the edge of his lips. "Green."

Nancy smiled and nodded, laying her head back onto the pillow. "Green," she repeated firmly, committing it firmly to memory before she drifted off.

Author's Note:

Literally how much cheesier can I get at this point.
Come talk to me about these babes on [tumblr!](#)